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ABSTRACT

The assignment described in this paper is an attempt to provide speech communication students with some training and experience in interviewing. Following discussion of the objective and rationale for conducting an interview and reporting information from an interview, guidelines are offered to help students with selecting subjects or content areas, preparing for the interview (including what to do on the day of the interview), and preparing the speech-report for class. Appended materials include a discussion of interviewing (how to structure an interview, with a checklist of steps for completing the assignment) and samples of forms used to collect evaluative responses from both the students and the interviewees. A selected bibliography on interviewing is attached. (RL)

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TWO FOR ONE: AN ASSIGNMENT INVOLVING INTERVIEWING AND SPEAKING

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CS503164

Communication Project #1

Description of the assignment (4-6 minute speech to inform)

This assignment has the student involved in two oral performances: (1) an information - getting interview and (2) a speech presentation reporting information about the interview. The interview is done outside of class at the student's discretion and the speech presentation report is given in class.

Objective of the assignment

It is to provide the student with an opportunity to get some interviewing experience by allowing the student to select a topic area and to find the person who is best able to provide him with the needed information. It is also to provide the student with an opportunity to synthesize the information he has obtained, to add relevant research and personal knowledge and to present it orally to the class.

Rationale for the assignment

Both the skill of obtaining information through asking questions and the skill of presenting the answers you have obtained are essential communication skills which no individual should be without. The following quotation provides added justification:

> Interviews as typically conducted, result in extensive inferences from limited data by people who often are not qualified by experience or training in this art. The seeming simplicity of the interview has led to its use by persons who do not do enough advance preparation who use it for measuring attributes which should be left to other techniques, and who do not spend sufficient time either in conducting the interview or in analyzing the information obtained. (Mandell)

This assignment is an attempt to provide you with some training and experience in interviewing. It does not intend to make you an expert interviewer. The report of the information you obtain is, in itself, clearly justified; for if you have information you must be able to present it to others or it will serve little value.

********WARNING: This assignment can not be done the day before it is due! You should start on selecting a subject area and pick an authority to interview right away! Do not interview a student or some person that you know fairly well.

Preparation before the interview:

I. Select a subject or content area in which you can obtain information from someone.

   A. Possible subject or content areas (these are only for your consideration to get you to see possible subject or content areas): For example:

      1. Interview a religious leader about student's views toward religion or about religion in a general way or about society's view of religion, etc.

      2. Interview a journalist, a newscaster, or reporter about their view

on disclosing sources of information, about their jobs, about the impact of the media on society, about special communication skills they need on the job, etc.

3. Interview educator(s) about their philosophy on education about innovations, about policies related to teachers students, (About how they keep the public informed), about student problems, about financial problems, about community related problems, etc.

4. Interview a fashion expert or designer about styles of today, about styles of tomorrow, about how fashion communicated, etc.

5. Interview someone in law enforcement about capital punishment, about law enforcement problems, about special programs, etc.

6. Interview a politician about campaigning, about issues local, state or nationally, about his profession, etc.

7. Interview someone in industry about his company, about its relation with the community, about its communication problems, about its product, e.c.

8. Interview someone in agriculture about the various innovations in the industry, about problems facing the industry, etc.

9. Interview someone in a position to speak authoritatively about the recent fuel and power shortages.

10. Interview professionals, or people in general about attitudes toward crime, sex, the economy, schools, education, government, etc.

11. Interview people with special talents, (for example artists, musicians, writers, special hobbies, unusual occupations, etc. not other students unless cleared in advance.)

12. Interview someone on sex discrimination, on racial problems, etc.

13. Interview university administrator(s) about their positions, about the kind of problems they encounter, about student problems about communication problems, about the university and its relation with the community, etc.

14. Interview someone who does interviewing about special techniques used to get information, about techniques used in employment, interviewing, etc.

15. Interview businessmen about the problems they have in a community, about location problems, about customer problems, etc.

16. You may wish to interview an established professional in your academic area concerning the importance of communication in this profession.

B. Select an objective or purpose. (what exactly do you want to obtain in the interview): for example,
1. just to gain information
2. to gain information about a person or group of persons
3. to learn about attitudes
4. to discover what is causing a controversy
5. to discover the effects of something, or-
6. etc

II. Selecting the individual you are going to interview (if no one is available or the person cannot be contacted in time to complete the assignment, you should find someone else or select a new subject area).
   A. Things to consider in your selection of an interviewee:
      1. Who has relevant information?
      2. Who is accessible?
      3. Who is willing to give relevant information?
      4. Who is most able to give the information?
   B. Make an appointment with the respondent for the interview.
      1. Explain who you are and what you intend to do.
      2. Provide the interviewee with any other appropriate information you deem necessary.

III. Preparing yourself for the interview:

   A. Get considerable background information on the subject area
   B. Try to get some background information on the respondent, if necessary, to aid you in the interview.
   C. Formulate your interview objective and determine your strategy.
      1. Interviews, like speeches, have a beginning, middle, and end.
      2. Prepare questions that will help you reach your objective or purpose.
      3. Determine how you are going to record the information you will be receiving. (See Appendix A.)

IV. The day of the interview

   A. Be on time for your appointment.
   B. Make sure you have your recording equipment with you-pen and paper, tape recorder, (ask if he minds and is aware of being recorded.)
   C. Introduce or re-introduce yourself and state or restate your purpose.
   D. For structuring of the interview see attached Appendix A
   E. Make sure you leave the evaluation form with the respondent along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

V. Preparing the speech-report for class

   A. You must now analyze the information and select out those parts which are most relevant for your four to six minute presentation. (Undertime or overtime will cost you!)
   B. Organize the body of your speech. It should follow some clear organization format.
   C. You should have a conclusion which summarizes what you did, what you found out, and what was the value of what you found out. The speech body could include a rationale for selection of the subject, background information on the subject, who was selected for the interview and why. What information was interesting, and what your evaluation was of the interview.

Appendix A

There are many fields and professions in which interviewing plays an important part or is a necessary auxiliary skill. For example, fields like medicine, law business, journalism, social work and research all use the interview in one or more of its many forms. The interview is used by employers to hire employees, it is used by physicians to gain information from patients, it is used by superiors to reprimand or appraise subordinates, it is used by teachers to counsel students, and it is used by politicians to give out information to their constituents.

Unlike public speaking, interviewing is an event in which messages are constantly being exhanged between two parties. In the interviewing situation both persons interchange roles of sender and receiver as they mutually influence one another in a face-to-face interaction. Thus, an interview includes messages which may be nonverbal as well as verbal, and messages which can be unintentional as well as intentional. And like any communication message, the interview can never be identical from sender to receiver, and interview to interview.

A definition which seems to combine the philosophy of the many others who define interviewing is one by Goyer, Redding, and Rickey (1968). They state that the interview "is a form of oral communication involving two or more parties, at least one of whom has a preconceived and serious purpose, and both of whom speak and listen from time to time (p. 6)." This implies that the interview is a bi-polar communication and that no other agent is operating. However, it is possible to have more than two persons actively participating in an interview, i.e., team interview, group interview, or board interview. Yet, any of these special types of group interviews, they essentially operate as bi-polars. This distinguishes the interview as a form of communication from group communication where each member is striving toward the same goal through cooperation. The interview is different from debate, even though in debate there are two sides and it is bi-polar, it does call for a third party to render a decision.

A second part of this definition of the interview is that there is a preconceived and serious purpose by at least one of the parties. For that matter both parties may have vested interest in the interaciton. Thus, while an interview may require the skills and insights of social communication, it also requires that some preparation be done and that the two parties are coming together for some other reason than just the pleasure of one another's company.

The third part to this definition is : both of whom speak and listen from time to time. Thus, interaction and transaction is the prerequisite to a successful interview. Both parties must be able to send and receive messages from one another but they must also be able to adapt to each other on a moment-to-moment basis. This distinguishes the interview from public speaking which calls for one person to be a sender and the other person or persons to be a receiver. In addition to this, the skilled interviewer can not depend on an advanced format or memorized presentation. The interview encompasses the total situation which calls for sensitivity to nonverbal communication, to feedback to attitudes, to feelings and to one's own self. Interviewing is categorized as intra-personal communication. Interviewing is probably one of the most demanding and all encompassing forms of communication, in addition to having the greatest potential productivity. The interviewer as well as the interviewee must be a reactor. Thus, the interview calls for skills in creating and sending messages which call for instant translation and interpretation. In addition the interviewer has to be highly flexible.

Appendix A

Structuring the Interview

Structuring the interview refers to the strategy from the first contact with the interviewee to the ending of the interview. The first contact and the opening question are probably the most crucial because this provides the context and establishes the immediate rapport of the interview which can greatly effect the outcome of the interview. Gordon (1969) suggests the following questions for consideration during this stage of the interview: (1) How should I introduce myself? (2) How should I explain the purpose of the interview? (3) Should I explain how and why the respondent was selected? (4) How should the interview be recorded, and how should the recording technique be explained? and (5) What are some appropriate alternative wordings for the opening question?

The introduction: Here the interviewer should merely tell who he is and how and for what reasor he is doing the interview. The purpose of the interview should then be clearly explained in terms so that the respondent understands what is expected of him. The explanation of purpose is often used to get into see the interviewee. The purpose is usually short and is often directly related to the opening question. Explanation of the selection of the respondent why he was selected, it may be because of his interests, his position, etc.

Recording the interview. Gordon suggests that the best method of recording the interview must be decided based on the following cirteria: "...the method that obtains the most complete and accurate detail may be chosen on which affords optimal interpersonal relations, of which makes the analysis of the data most efficient. Notetaking can consist of recording the respondents exact words, taking down central ideas, or by classifying responses according to a predefined checklist.

In taking notes during the interview one must be sure that the note-taking does not interfere with the flow of the discussion. Note-taking should not create noise or a disturbance to an effective an efficient interaction. Note-taking can have an effect on the interview and the report of the interview, so caution should be exercised in this matter.

Tape recorders are not always used because of the cost when many people are to be interviewed. When they are used Gordon recommends the following precautions:

1) The interviewer should become thoroughly familiar with the machine so that he doesn't feel insecure in its use or devote too much attention to it.

2) The physical setting should be arranged, if possible, so that the tape recorder is out of the way.

3) The microphone should be inconspicous and out of the direct line of sight as the interviewer and respondent face each other.

4) The use of the recording machine would be explained in forthwright matter of fact way.

5) Once the interview begins, the interviewer shouls show no awareness of the tape recorder's presence.

Very seldom will someone object to the use of a tape recorder. One should be careful not to raise doubts about its use. The interviewer can usually avoid

problems by acting as if the use of a recorder is routine. Gordon suggests explanations that can be used:

> I am interested in getting all the details of your story (information) in precisely your own words. Since I can't take shorthand and don't want a third person present, the best way is to let this machine do all the work.
>
> or:
>
> We always record the interview so that the information will be accurate. I will listen to it and type the relevant material so that the tape can be used over again.

Other considerations: If you plan to use a tape recorder try to find one which can operate off of batteries and has a built-in microphone. Make sure that everything is operating correctly before the interview. Know exactly how long the tape runs on one side and be able to switch to the opposite side or to a new tape at the right time. Practice the use of the recorder. Make sure you have the volume set correctly.

Planning the opening question. At this point the introduction is over and the background information has been presented to the respondent, and you are ready to begin the questions. It is advisable to have several opening questions. The opening question may either be open-ended enough to delineate the entire subject of the interview, or it may be one single point. In either case the question should be related to the objective of the interview.

Once the interview is underway the interviewer must be able to adjust to the opening answer with the use of follow-up probes if necessary to get a complete answer or one that meets his objective. Other questions should be ready to be asked all of which leads the interviewer to his objective. Remember an interview is not a speech presentation by either party. It is an interaction where both the interviewee and the interviewer speak and listen from time to time.

Closing the interview. The interviewer must at some point feel as if he has accomplished his objective and that the interviewee has provided him with all the necessary information, when this pointcomes the interviewer must be ready to close off the discussion.

Other consideration for the interview. Your appearance should be in accordance with the situation and the person whom you are interviewing. Common sense should be your guide. When in doubt gals should wear something other than blue jeans and sweatshirt, and guys should wear a coat and tie. If you don't understand a response be ready to paraphrase back or to ask a clarifying question. Be careful of using too many closed questions which call for a yes or no response. Be confident and alert by knowing exactly what you want. Be conscious of the time you are taking from the interviewee.

Check list for project #1

_____1. I have read all materials assigned.

_____2. I have selected a subject area.

_____3. I have selected an approach to the subject.

Check list for project #1 continued

____4. I have selected a respondent.

____5. I have made an apointment with the respondent and have explained to him what I am doing.

____6. Prepared myself by getting as much background information as possible.

____7. Set up the structure to my interview.

____8. Selected the method in which I will record information during the interview.

____9. Conducted the interview.

____10. Completed Appendix B which is to be turned into my instructor on the day of my speech report.

____11. Analyzed and limited information to meet time criteria for speech presentation.

____12. Completed a practice speech and make massive adjustments utilizing the feedback from peers who have heard you.

Appendix B

This is to be given to your instructor after the interview on the day of your speech presentation on the interview.

Student's Name _____

Instructor's Name Dr. Jerry L. Winsor

Interviewee's Name _____

Interviewee's position and business affiliation _____

_____

_____

Purpose of interview _____

_____

_____

1. What kind of reception did you get? Describe interviewee's appearance, manner, delivery, dress. Describe the atmosphere of the interview, opening remarks, and anything else that impressed you (favorably or unfavorably).

2. Describe the interviewee's manner during the interview. Did he make you feel at ease? How did she/he accomplish this? Be specific.

Appendix B

3. Did you have any difficulty getting the information you wanted? If so, what do you think caused the difficulty? (For example, vocabulary, unwillingness to give information, etc.)

4. How did you find the experience? What did you perceive as your biggest weakness, if any? If you had to do it over again what would you have changed? Do you think you accomplished your objective?

Appendix C

This page is to be given to the person you interview.

Student's name _____

Instructor's name Dr. Jerry L. Winsor
Department of Speech Communication
Office Address 136J Martin, CMSU
Warrensburg, MO 64093

Note to student: Attach a stamped envelope addressed to your instructor so that your interviewee can mail it directly to your instructor.

TO THE INTERVIEWEE:

Please complete this form and return as soon as possible. Your comments will be of greater value to the student, if they are stated frankly. The student will benefit more by having his faults called to his attention than be having a number of complimentary remarks made about him. This report will have only modest bearing on the student's grade in the course. (Its main purpose is to provide him with objective criticism from a professional person outside the classroom). Please use another sheet if necessary.

1. What were your frank reactions to the manner in which the student initiated the interview? (Did he/she give a clear explanation of the type of information he/she was seeking, and why he/she was seeking it?)

2. What were your reactions to the student as an individual? (What could he/she do to improve the personal impressions that he/she made? What specifically might be corrected? For example: Confidence, initiative, eye contact, voice, vocabulary, etc.?)

3. What were your reactions to the way the student conducted the interview? (Use of questions, interest, etc. What did he fail to do? For example, did he/she go too slow or too fast?)

4. What specific suggestions do you have for this student that might help him/her in future situations of this kind?

Signed _____ Firm _____

Position _____ Address _____

_____

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